



German Church and Civil Records

Fritz Juengling PhD, AG®

This course is designed to give family history researchers who read little or no German and have had no experience with German vital records a basic working knowledge of such records.

Objectives:

Patrons will be able to identify:

- types of important documents
- key information in documents

Church registration began considerably earlier than civil registration, as early as the 15th century in some cases. However, this does not mean that church registration was introduced uniformly throughout the German-speaking region. Generally speaking, the western parts of Germany had registration earlier than the eastern parts.

Civil registration starts in Germany in the 1790s when the French occupy the territory left of the Rhine. However, such registration was restricted to those areas, not to the whole of Germany and was generally discontinued after French withdrawal. Civil registration was finally instituted on a nationwide basis in 1876.

A short glossary of words related to church and civil records:

Basic vocabulary for German records

year: Jahr, Anno, Ao, Annus

day: Tag

on the: am, den

place: Ort

residing: wohnhaft zu, wohnend

name: Name, Vorname, Zuname

Months are the same or very similar to English

baptism: getauft, get. Getaufte, Taufe, Täufling, baptizat-

birth: Geburt, Geborene, geboren (am), geb.

parents: Eltern

father: Vater

mother: Mutter

child: Kind

girl/daughter/female: Mädchen, Tochter, Töchterlein, weiblich

boy/son/male: Junge, Knabe, Sohn, Söhnlein, männlich

godparents: Pat(h)en, Gevattern, Gote, Gött, Sponsa

witnesses: (Tauf)Zeugen, levantes, levantibus, susceptoris, testes

marriage: Ehe, Eheschließung, Trauung, Heiraten, Heuraten, Vermählung, copuliert, Copulati
maiden name: geb., geborene, née
unmarried: unverheiratet
age: Alter, Alt., aetatis

death: gestorben, starb, Verstorbene, Gestorbene
buried: begraben, beerdigt, bestattet, Begräbnis, Beerdigungen

For a more extensive vocabulary list, see:

https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Word_List

For an article on German language, including numbers, see:

https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/German_Language_and_Languages

For handouts and videos on German handwriting see:

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Handwriting (This is the page to begin with, as it gives many links and other resources)

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/File:Old_German_Handwriting.jpg

<https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/results.html?fq=place%3A%22Germany%22&resultListItem=1>

For further reading:

“Germany Civil Registration.” FamilySearch Wiki.

https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Civil_Registration#General_Historical_Background

Handwriting (you will find links to other classes and tutorials)

https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Germany_Handwriting

Want to learn more? See this site:

FamilySearch Research Wiki: https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Main_Page

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